

Avifauna of Nguuni, near Mombasa, Kenya, between September 1984 and October 1987: Part II — Palaearctic species

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The first part of this paper dealt with the Afrotropical species recorded at the Nguuni study site over a three year survey period. The present part lists the Palaearctic species observed at this site over the same period and consequently the introductory descriptions of study site, method and climatic variations in Part I pertain here too.

Species observations

The annotated list that follows includes all 54 Palaearctic species recorded at the study area in the 38 months between Sep 1984 and Oct 1987. Where relevant reference is made to personal observations from elsewhere on the Kenya coast. An Appendix presents the monthly occurrence of Palaearctic species at the study site: only those recorded in six or more survey months are included (data for others are given in the text).

Garganey *Anas querquedula* one on a pond in Nov 1985. In late Oct 1986 two on another pond but left after being joined by a third.

Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* seven sightings of single birds wheeling over open grassland and fell in Mar, Oct, Nov 1985 and Feb 1986.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* two—a male in Mar and a female in Nov, 1985.

Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus gallicus* though the Afrotropical subspecies *C.g.pectoralis* occurred regularly, this Palaearctic race was seen only twice, at the shale quarry, over a nine-day period in mid-late Oct 1987, probably one individual

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* one at the shale quarry in Apr 1986.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* Singles, and on one occasion two, on eight occasions over the study area between mid-Nov and early Apr.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* as a common visitor to the region, the Palaearctic nominate race undoubtedly occurred, though no specific records of races were kept.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* an adult in early Dec 1984. In mid-May 1985 a juvenile in a doum palm was continuously mobbed by several Indian House Crows *Corvus splendens*, a Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudata* and a Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*; another juvenile in late Mar 1986.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* one perched in a tree in early Mar 1987.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* As stated in Part I, three in Nov 1984 and Dec 1986 were probable migrants since the resident race is scarce in the region.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* singles in the shale quarry in late Oct 1984, and early Apr 1986, and at the sheep pens in mid-Mar 1986 feeding on dungflies after rain.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* appeared singly and in small numbers at the shale quarry pool during S and N passage—in Nov 1984, early May 1985, Mar and Oct 1987. A flock of 10 was seen with Little Stints in early May 1986.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* present at the margins of ponds throughout the year, albeit in small numbers, but rare in May–Aug. None recorded in June in any sample year.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* recorded in most months except June and July; numbers highest in Oct–May. Like the Common Sandpiper, they favoured muddy pond edges.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* recorded in all but ten sample months at the shallow pool in the shale quarry and pond edges. As elsewhere in the region, a few oversummering birds were usually present.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* singles or small groups, mainly at shale quarry pool or on temporary puddles on tracks after rain, but were not seen at the edges of the permanent ponds typically favoured by the previous three species. Records restricted to S passage (late Oct–early Nov, except for one record in mid-Sep) and N passage (mid-Mar to early May).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* three, feeding at pond edges: in late Oct 1984, mid-Jan 1987 and mid-Oct 1987.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* one in long grass inundated after rain in late Oct 1987.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* though common along the seashore 5 km distant, only two birds, perhaps the same individual, were recorded during this survey at a pond edge and the shale quarry pool in early and late Nov 1986, respectively.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* plentiful along the coast but only recorded on two occasions at Nguuni—one in mid-Oct 1985 and four in early May 1986, all at the shale quarry pool.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* absent from mid-May to early Oct, except for one which remained through mid and late Aug 1987; regular in small numbers at the shale quarry pool through the Palaearctic winter.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* singles at one pond on three occasions over a 26-day period in Feb 1986 probably represents a single individual. Two feeding at a pond edge in late Oct 1986.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* 12 at the shale quarry pool in early Apr 1986, one at a pond in mid-Dec 1986 and two at different sites on the same occasion in mid-Oct 1987.

Eurasian Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* an adult male mid-Nov 1985. Two overflying northwards in early May 1986 and a perched juvenile in early Nov 1986 were probably of this species, in view of the scarcity of the similar African Cuckoo *C. gularis*.

Eurasian Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* singles over grassland at dusk and dawn in Mar 1985 and Mar 1986, respectively.

Eurasian Swift *Apus apus* eight birds flying over at low level in mid-Oct 1986 was the only record for Nguuni, although they were occasionally seen nearer the coast.

Eurasian Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* this species often reaches substantial numbers in the Shimba Hills and Tsavo region and is seen migrating along the coastline during N passage. However, only two singles were seen at Nguuni in early Mar 1985 and Mid-Oct 1987.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* recorded on only five occasions during early Feb to early Mar in 1985 and 1986, this species usually accompanied Carmine Bee-eaters *M. nubicus*.

Eurasian Roller *Coracias garrulus* occurs in large numbers in the Shimba Hills and the Tsavo region during N passage but less numerous on the coastal strip. At Nguuni, singles appeared spasmodically from late Nov–late Feb.

Eurasian Swallow *Hirundo rustica* always present by early Oct, during their southerly passage; earlier birds were seen in mid-Sep 1985. Absent in Dec but numerous on N passage, gathering in large roosts in *Typha* beds. The timing of these passages seemed to vary: the spring movement of 1985 (mid-Jan–late Feb) being strikingly earlier than that of 1986 (early Mar–early May).

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* a small flock feeding over a pond in mid-Nov 1985.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* recorded in small numbers in late Oct–early Nov with an absence in Dec–Jan, and seen again from mid-Feb to early Apr. Markedly more common in gardens with fruiting neem trees along the coast.

Rufous Bush Chat *Cercotrichas galactotes* appeared late at Nguuni, perhaps on spring passage, in mid-Jan to early Apr, with only one earlier sighting (in early Dec 1986). They favoured *Acacia* thicket in grassland.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* apart from a single bird in early Dec 1986, all records were from early Feb to mid-Mar in dense cover.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* frequent in areas of *Acacia* with bare ground below, typically in the sheep pens, in Nov–early Apr.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* in dry open and denuded areas, such as the drier parts of the shale quarry and the more open sheep pens, resident between early Nov and mid-Mar with two earlier records in late Sep 1985.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* in similar habitat to Isabelline, but also amongst scattered trees. Markedly more common throughout the Palaearctic winter (late Oct–early Apr).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* one in mid-Feb 1987 in the shale quarry, a site favoured by the other Palaearctic wheatears.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* singles in bush in mid-Nov and early Dec 1985. Two others occurred in a pond-side *Typha* bed in mid-Apr 1986.

Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* one in dense thicket adjacent to a pond in mid-Dec 1984.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* one in bushes at the shale quarry in mid-Apr 1986.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* singles were seen in *Acacia* thicket in mid-Apr 1985 and late Feb 1986. In Apr 1984, prior to the survey, one was stunned on a window in Bamburi, 5 km from Nguuni.

Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum* once in mid-Oct, and frequent between mid-Jan and late Mar.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* the commonest Palaearctic warbler at Nguuni, and though recorded in small numbers in Oct–Jan they sometimes reached high densities in *Acacia* at the sheep station in early Feb–early Apr.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Two in small *Acacia* trees in mid and late Mar 1986.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* a female or juvenile in *Acacia* thicket in early Mar 1987.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* one in *Acacia* in late Nov 1985.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* extremely common on areas of bushy grassland and patches of open woodland from mid-Oct to mid-Apr; preferring rather more open habitat than in the breeding range.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* small numbers during S passage (mid-Oct to late Nov) by the shale quarry pool but only once later, in late Mar 1986.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* one in early Mar 1985 at a pond edge.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* numerous in all open areas, particularly near water, from early Oct to late Apr; a large roost containing more than a thousand birds, and other smaller ones, formed in stands of *Typha*, particularly on N passage. Once, a White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus* was seen attempting to take birds at one of these roosts.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* common throughout the region including the study area from mid-Oct to mid-Apr and favoured bushy grassland.

Red-tailed Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* though markedly less common than the previous species, it was seen regularly between mid-Oct and mid-Mar. No differences noted in habitat requirements.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* one in a small *Acacia* in grassland in early Apr 1986.

Discussion

A total of 54 Palearctic species was recorded during the 38-month survey. A lack of night-time visits may have resulted in under-recording of nocturnal species such as nightjars.

Of the 22 species recorded in six or more survey months, i.e. an average of at least two sample months per year (see Appendix), 12 species wintered at Nguuni although in some cases, e.g. Red-backed Shrike, their numbers were supplemented by birds on spring passage (Table 1). The remaining 10 species occurred on passage only—in six species northern passage was markedly heavier than southern passage but in one, the Red-throated Pipit, the reverse was the case. Although Green Sandpipers were seen in six sample months in southern passage compared with four on the return trip, the total numbers of birds involved were similar. Species not listed in Table 1 occurred mainly on passage and were either scarce or accidental.

Times of arrival and departure, and habitat preferences generally conformed to those given by Lewis & Pomeroy (1988). However, eight species had not been recorded by them in square 102D (Nguuni): Montagu's Harrier, Common Buzzard, Steppe Eagle, Eurasian Swift, Icterine Warbler, Olive-tree Warbler, Blackcap, and Grey Wagtail. In most cases these records involved one or two sightings of birds on passage, probably deviating from their usual routes. Though Olive-tree Warblers were previously recorded only at Watamu, their frequency at Nguuni in Jan–Mar in all years of the survey indicates a regular occurrence on the coastal strip during winter and spring passage. Eurasian Swift and Icterine Warbler were each recorded only once at Nguuni but were also seen in small numbers at nearby sites between 1984 and 1987 (pers obs). Though considered rare at the coast, there were nine records of Common Buzzards in eight sample months. They were usually transitory but consecutive records in Jan, Feb, Mar

Table 1. *Classification of Palaearctic species recorded in six or more sample months at Nguuni according to their pattern of occurrence*

Species	Occurrence
Eurasian Marsh Harrier	SP < NP
Common Buzzard	SP < NP
Common Sandpiper	OW
Wood Sandpiper	OW
Greenshank	OW
Green Sandpiper	SP = NP
Little Stint	OW
Eurasian Roller	OW?
Eurasian Swallow	SP < NP
Golden Oriole	SP < NP
Rufous Bush Chat	OW? < NP
Nightingale	NP
Rock Thrush	OW
Isabelline Wheatear	OW
Northern Wheatear	OW
Olive-tree Warbler	SP < NP
Olivaceous Warbler	SP < NP
Spotted Flycatcher	OW
Red-throated Pipit	SP > NP
Yellow Wagtail	OW
Red-backed Shrike	OW < NP
Red-tailed Shrike	OW

Key to Symbols	
NP	recorded only on northern passage
SP = NP	occurring about as frequently on both passages
SP < NP	most records on northern passage
SP > NP	most records on southern passage
OW	overwintering
OW < NP	wintering population incremented by N passage birds

and Apr 1986 (Appendix) may have represented one bird which remained in the area. A sighting of a Palaearctic race Short-toed Eagle is also noteworthy as it was only previously known from the north in Kenya.

In view of the large numbers of Palaearctic waders wintering along the coastline, 5 km away, they were poorly represented at Nguuni and even those species which did occur there—Wood and Common Sandpiper, Greenshank and Little Stint—were in small numbers. Suitable habitat was very restricted as the nine dammed ponds in the study area were small and deep with few mud banks and shallows for wader feeding. In addition, they were somewhat enclosed by fringing *Typha*, *Cyperus* or nearby scrub which most favoured Common and Wood Sandpipers. The shale quarry pond was shallow and in an open location but the ample mud banks, derived from eroded shale

and murram, contained few invertebrates (pers. obs.). Nevertheless, this pool yielded most of the wader records. Species characteristic of tidal mud flats such as sandpipers, Grey Plover, Curlew Sandpiper, Sanderling, Whimbrel, Marsh Sandpiper were rare or absent during this survey. P. B. Taylor (pers. comm.) recorded more of these species at Nguuni during 1980–81, perhaps reflecting the higher rainfall and more extensive flooding, as well as less human disturbance, at that time. The absence of Little Stint and Green Sandpiper from Jan to May 1986 coincided with a disappearance of Afrotropical wetland species such as Long-tailed Cormorant, Woolly-necked Stork and Pied Kingfisher (see Part I) and was probably due to the combined effects of drought and increased human disturbance. As noted by Britton (1980), oversummering juvenile Greenshanks were not uncommon both at Nguuni and the adjacent coast. Common Sandpipers were also recorded throughout the Palaearctic summer except for June.

Some non aquatic Palaearctic species—Spotted Flycatcher, Red-backed Shrike, Eurasian Swallow and Yellow Wagtail—sometimes outnumbered resident species at Nguuni. Eurasian Swallows and Yellow Wagtails formed roosts, sometimes in their thousands, in stands of *Typha* prior to northern passage. Macworth-Praed & Grant (1960) referred to similar congregations in these species during spring migration. Northern Wheatears always outnumbered Isabelline Wheatears and inhabited areas with scattered trees as well as the open dry areas favoured by the latter. Lack (1985) found a similar habitat separation in these species in Tsavo East National Park.

The overgrazed and dusty sheep paddocks shaded by large *Acacias* were favoured by Northern Wheatears, Rock Thrushes and Red-backed Shrikes; Yellow Wagtails fed there, particularly after rain. Situated on a low hill, the dense canopies of these *Acacias* attracted Olive-tree and Olivaceous Warblers in Mar–early May, Olivaceous sometimes in large numbers. Rock Thrushes were most numerous in Jan–Mar compared with Dec–Jan in Tsavo East (Lack 1985). Though Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* occur on passage, and small numbers overwinter in southeastern Kenya (Pearson 1982), it was not detected at Nguuni, despite apparently suitable habitat.

Red-backed Shrikes were much more common than Red-tailed and, though both species wintered in small numbers in bushed grassland, there was marked incrementation of Red-backed during northern passage. Eurasian Rollers, Eurasian Bee-eaters and Lesser Grey Shrikes sometimes reached large numbers during northern passage in Tsavo and the Shimba Hills (pers. obs.) but were scarce at Nguuni and elsewhere on the coastal lowlands.

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species	year	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Little Stint	1984									o	+	+	+
	1985	+	o	o	o	+	o	o	o	o	+	+	o
	1986	+	+	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	+	+
	1987	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o	+		
Eurasian Roller	1984									o	o	o	+
	1985	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o
	1986	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o
	1987	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o		
Eurasian Swallow	1984									o	+	+	o
	1985	++	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+	o	o
	1986	o	o	++	++	+	o	o	o	o	+	+	o
	1987	+	+	o	+	o	o	o	o	o	+		
Golden Oriole	1984									o	o	o	o
	1985	o	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o	o
	1986	o	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+	o
	1987	o	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	+		
Rufous Bush Chat	1984									o	o	o	o
	1985	+	+	o	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
	1986	o	o	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+
	1987	o	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o		
Nightingale	1984									o	o	o	o
	1985	o	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
	1986	o	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+
	1987	o	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o		
Rock Thrush	1984									o	o	o	o
	1985	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o
	1986	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+
	1987	+	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o		
Isabelline Wheatear	1984									o	o	o	o
	1985	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o	+	o
	1986	+	+	++	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+
	1987	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o		
Northern Wheatear	1984									o	o	+	o
	1985	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+	+
	1986	+	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+
	1987	+	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o		
Olive-tree Warbler	1984									o	o	o	o
	1985	o	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
	1986	+	o	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
	1987	o	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	+		
Olivaceous Warbler	1984									o	o	o	o
	1985	o	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
	1986	o	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+
	1987	o	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	+		

species	year	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Spotted Flycatcher	1984									o	+	+	+
	1985	+	++	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	+	++	+
	1986	+	++	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	+	++	++
	1987	++	++	++	+	o	o	o	o	o	+		
Red-throated Pipit	1984									o	o	+	o
	1985	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+	o
	1986	o	o	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o
	1987	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+		
Yellow Wagtail	1984									o	o	+	+
	1985	+	++	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+	+
	1986	+	+	+	++	o	o	o	o	o	++	++	++
	1987	+++	+	++	o	o	o	o	o	o	o		
Red-backed Shrike	1984									o	o	o	+
	1985	+	++	o	++	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o
	1986	o	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o
	1987	+	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	+		
Red-tailed Shrike	1984									o	o	o	o
	1985	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	o
	1986	o	o	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+	+
	1987	+	+	+	o	o	o	o	o	o	o		

Addenda

There were the following mistakes in Part I of Dr Ryall's paper (*Scopus* 15: 1-23):

p. 6: the account of Harlequin Quail should not have been run on under Pygmy Falcon.

p. 6, between Spur-winged Plover and Spotted Thicknee, insert:

Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta sightings of single juveniles by ponds in early and mid-Dec probably refer to the same bird.

Appendix A, pp. 17-19:

All the 1984 records for Little Grebe to Didric Cuckoo should be in the columns September to December, i.e. all the symbols printed for these 30 species should be moved to the right by varying amounts.